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ALEXANDRIA NEWPORT NEWS NORFOLK RICHMOND

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY CHUCK ROSENBERG

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Jim Rybicki
Public Information Officer
Phone: (703) 842-4050 Fax: (703) 549-5202
E-Mail: usavae.press@usdoj.gov
Website: www.usdoj.gov/usao/vae

Further Information Contact:
Deanna Warren
Phone: (757) 441-6331

Massachusetts Man Sentenced for Identity Theft, Counterfeit Credit Card Scheme

(Norfolk, Virginia) - Mohamed Lamine Kone, age 28, of Cherry Valley, Massachusetts, was sentenced today to 61 months in prison for aggravated identity theft and use of counterfeit credit cards. Chuck Rosenberg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, made the announcement after Kone was sentenced by United States District Judge Rebecca Beach Smith. Restitution in the amount of \$224,939.50 to 66 victims of Kone's offenses was also ordered. Kone had pled guilty to these charges on September 11, 2006.

According to court documents, Angelic Arcellana, a front desk clerk at the Comfort Inn Hotel at the Virginia Beach oceanfront, provided Charles Ross with the credit card information of hotel guests in exchange for cash. Between August 2005 and February 2006, Arcellana sold to Ross and a co-conspirator in New York City, the names and credit card information of over 100 hotel guests. These stolen credit card account numbers were then used to produce counterfeit credit cards in the names of co-conspirators. The co-conspirators then used these cards to purchase airplane tickets, hotel rooms and rental cars. They also traveled around the country purchasing high-end electronic items such as flat screen TVs and Ipods, which were later sold for cash.

On at least four occasions, Mohamed Kone purchased some of these counterfeit credit cards which had been produced in his name and in the name of George Tickle, a co-conspirator. After purchasing the fraudulent cards in New York, Kone would travel to the Hampton Roads region and meet up with Tickle, where they would obtain hotel rooms and rent cars using the counterfeit cards. They then drove around the region making purchases with the cards until the card limits had been reached, at which point Kone would return to New York with the stolen merchandise.

Overall monetary losses resulting from this counterfeit card scheme were over \$340,000. Several of the co-conspirators have already been sentenced in federal court in Norfolk to the following prison terms: Angelic Arcellana, 36 months; George Tickle, 39 months; Billy Ray Smith, 13 months; and Charles Ross, 134 months.

The case was investigated by the Norfolk Divisions of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. Assistant United States Attorney Stephen W. Haynie prosecuted the case for the United States.

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